

SATIRE 12

natali, Coruine, die mihi dulcior haec lux,
qua festus promissa deis animalia caespes
expectat. niueam reginae ducimus agnam,
par uellus dabitur pugnanti Gorgone Maura;
sed procul extensum petulans quatit hostia funem
5 Tarpeio seruata Ioui frontemque coruscat,
quippe ferox uitulus templis maturus et arae
spargendusque mero, quem iam pudet ubera matris
ducere, qui uexat nascenti robora cornu.

si res ampla domi similisque adfectibus esset,
10 pinguior Hispulla traheretur taurus et ipsa
mole piger, nec finitima nutritus in herba,
laeta sed ostendens Clitumni pascua sanguis
et grandi ceruix iret ferienda ministro
ob redditum trepidantis adhuc horrendaque passi
nuper et incolumem sese mirantis amici.

nam praeter pelagi casus et fulminis ictus
euasit. densae caelum abscondere tenebrae
nube una subitusque antemnas inpulit ignis.

cum se quisque illo percussum crederet et mox
20 attonitus nullum conferri posse putaret
naufragium uelis ardentibus. omnia fiunt
talia, tam grauiter, si quando poetica surgit
tempestas. genus ecce aliud discriminis audi
et miserere iterum, quamquam sint cetera sortis
eiusdem pars dira quidem sed cognita multis
et quam uotiua testantur fana tabella
plurima: pictores quis nescit ab Iside pasci?
accidit et nostro similis fortuna Catullo.

cum plenus fluctu medius foret alueus et iam,
30 alternum puppis latus euertentibus undis,
arboris incertae, nullam prudentia cani
rectoris cum ferret opem, decidere iactu

¹⁴ et grandi cervix iret *Housman*: iret et grandi cervix *PA*
³² incertae *PO*: incerta *F*

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Sweeter to me than my own birthday, Corvinus, is this day, on which the holiday turf is awaiting the animals promised to the gods. For the queen (of the gods) we are bringing a snowy lamb, and a fleece every bit as good will be given to the god who does battle armed with the Moorish Gorgon; (5) but the victim reserved for Tarpeian Jupiter is lustily shaking the rope which is stretched out afar, and it tosses its head, as it is a feisty calf old enough for temples and the altar and now fit to be sprinkled with wine; it is now embarrassed to tug at its mother's udders, it hits out at the oak trees with its growing horns. If the wealth in my home were lavish and equal to my feelings, (10) then a bull fatter than Hispulla would be dragged along, lazy because of its very size, not fed on grass from round here but whose blood shows evidence of the rich pastures of Clitumnus; and its neck would advance to face a hit from the large assistant all for the sake of the return of my friend who is still trembling after suffering dreadful things recently (15) and who is amazed that he is safe and sound.

For along with the dangers of the sea he also dodged the lightning strikes. Thick darkness blotted out the sky with a single cloud-mass and a sudden fire struck the yardarms. When every man thought he had been hit by it and then (20) thunderstruck decided that no shipwreck could be as bad as having your sails burning – then everything happens like this, so calamitously, whenever a poetic storm rises up – then (look!) a new type of dilemma comes along. Listen and pity him again, although the rest of the tale (25) is just part of the same destiny; dreadful, no doubt, but well-known to many people and the kind of event which huge numbers of shrines bear witness to with their votive tablets. Who does not know that artists are fed by Isis? A calamity like this also befell our Catullus.

When the belly of the ship was filled to the middle with water and (30) the waves were by this point overturning now one, now the other side of the ship with its tottering mast, and the hoary-headed helmsman's skill provided no help to it, then he started to make a deal with the winds, by throwing

coepit cum uentis, imitatus castora, qui se
eunuchum ipse facit cupiens euadere damno
testiculi: adeo medicatum intellegit inguen.

35

‘fundite quae mea sunt’ dicebat ‘cuncta’ Catullus
praecipitare uolens etiam pulcherrima, uestem
purpuream teneris quoque Maecenatibus aptam,
atque alias quarum generosi graminis ipsum
infecit natura pecus, sed et egregius fons
uiribus occultis et Baeticus adiuuat aer.

40

ille nec argentum dubitabat mittere, lances
Parthenio factas, urnae cratera capacem
et dignum sitiente Pholo uel coniuge Fusci;
adde et bascaudas et mille escaria, multum
caelati, biberat quo callidus emptor Olynthi.
sed quis nunc alias, qua mundi parte quis audet
argento praeferre caput rebusque salutem?

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[non propter uitam faciunt patrimonia quidam,
sed uitio caeci propter patrimonia uiuunt.]

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iactatur rerum utilium pars maxima, sed nec
damna leuant. tunc aduersis urguntibus illuc
reccidit ut malum ferro summitteret, ac se
explicat angustum: discriminis ultima, quando

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praesidia adferimus nauem factura minorem.
i nunc et uentis animam committe dolato
confisus ligno, digitis a morte remotus
quattuor aut septem, si sit latissima, taedae;

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mox cum reticulis et pane et uentre lagonae
accipe sumendas in tempestate secures.

sed postquam iacuit planum mare, tempora postquam
prospera uectoris fatumque ualentius euro
et pelago, postquam Parcae meliora benigna
pensa manu ducunt hilares et staminis albi
lanifcae, modica nec multum fortior aura
uentus adest, inopi miserabilis arte cucurrit
uestibus extensis et, quod superauerat unum,
uelo prora suo. iam deficientibus austris

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⁵⁰⁻⁵¹ *deleuit Bentley*

⁶² iacuit Φ : tacuit *PSA*

away (his goods), imitating the beaver which makes itself a eunuch in its desire to get away by losing (35) a testicle: it realises that its groin is so packed with drugs. ‘Pour away my property,’ Catullus said, ‘all of it’, being prepared to throw away even the most beautiful things: purple clothing fit even for louche Maecenases and other cloths from actual flocks (40) which the nature of the noble grass has coloured, helped by the special spring with its hidden powers as well as the weather of Baetica.

He did not hesitate to get rid of silver, dishes made for Parthenius, a mixing-bowl that held three gallons, fit for a thirsty Pholus or even for Fuscus’ wife; (45) add in the baskets and a thousand platters, and a great deal of engraved silver from which the canny buyer of Olynthus had drunk. But then who else, in what part of the world, has the guts to put his life before his money, his safety before his property? [Some folk do not earn fortunes for the sake of living their lives (50) but, blinded by their faults, they live for the sake of their fortunes.]

The majority of the useful stuff is thrown overboard, but even so the losses do not relieve the situation: with calamity putting him under pressure like this he fell back on lowering the mast with a blade, and in this way he unties himself from his narrow strait. The furthest point of danger is reached when we (55) apply strengthening measures which are going to make the ship smaller. Go now and entrust your life to the winds, putting your trust in a smooth plank, saved from death by four fingers of pine or seven if the wood is at its thickest. Next time, remember that along with the bread in nets and the wide-bellied flagon, (60) you should get hold of axes that you will need to pick up in the event of a storm. But after the sea lay flat, after the traveller’s weather-conditions turned out favourable and his destiny was more powerful than the wind and the ocean; once the Fates cheerfully produce better threads with a kindly hand, making wool from white thread, (65) and a wind not much stronger than a modest breeze appears, then the ship’s prow ran on, wretched, with skill impoverished, with clothes stretched out along with the one sail which had survived. The South winds

spes uitae cum sole redit. tum gratus Iulo
 atque nouercali sedes praelata Lauino
 conspicitur sublimis apex, cui candida nomen
 scrofa dedit, laetis Phrygibus mirabile sumen
 et numquam uisis triginta clara mamillis.
 tandem intrat positas inclusa per aquora moles
 Tyrrhenamque pharon porrectaque bracchia rursum
 quae pelago occurrunt medio longeque relinquunt
 Italiam; non sic igitur mirabere portus
 quos natura dedit. sed trunca puppe magister
 interiora petit Baianae peruvia cumbae
 tuni stagna sinus, gaudent ubi uertice raso
 garrula securi narrare pericula nautae.

ite igitur, pueri, linguis animisque fauentes
 sertaque delubris et farra inponite cultris
 ac mollis ornate focos glebamque uirentem.
 iam sequar et sacro, quod praestat, rite peracto
 inde domum repetam, graciles ubi parua coronas
 accipiunt fragili simulacula nitentia cera.
 hic nostrum placabo Iouem Laribusque paternis
 tura dabo atque omnis uiolae iactabo colores.
 cuncta nitent, longos erexit ianua ramos
 et matutinis operatur festa lucernis.
 neu suspecta tibi sint haec, Coruine, Catullus,
 pro cuius reditu tot pono altaria, paruos
 tres habet heredes. libet expectare quis aegram
 et claudentem oculos gallinam inpendat amico
 tam sterili; uerum haec nimia est impensa, coturnix
 nulla umquam pro patre cadet. sentire calorem
 si coepit locuples Gallitta et Pacius orbi,
 legitime fixis uestitur tota libellis
 porticus, existunt qui promittant hecatomben,
 quatenus hic non sunt nec uenales elephanti,
 nec Latio aut usquam sub nostro sidere talis
 belua concipitur, sed furua gente petita

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⁷³ mirabile Φ : miserable *PSA*

⁷⁸ igitur *mss*: similis *Housman*

were by now subsiding and hope of life returned along with the sun. Then the lofty (70) peak which Iulus loved, the abode which he preferred to his stepmother's Lavinium, is spotted, the place to which the white sow gave its name, whose dugs were astonishing to the happy Phrygians, a sow famous for her thirty teats – a number which were a sight never seen before. Finally it comes inside the breakwaters placed along the waters they contain, (75) the Etruscan lighthouse and the arms stretched back out which meet in the middle of the sea and leave Italy far behind; you will not be as impressed by the harbours which nature has given us. The captain with his stunted poop heads for the inner port, which a skiff from Baiae could reach, (80) the still waters of the safe gulf. Here the sailors with shaved head, free now from danger, are glad to tell the tale of their long-winded perils.

So go now, slaves, with respectful tongues and minds, put garlands on the shrines and grain on your knives, and deck out the soft hearths and the green turf. (85) I will follow presently and, once the most important sacred ritual has been carried out, I will then make my way home, where the small statues, gleaming with the crumbling wax, are getting their slender crowns. Here I will appease our own Jupiter and I will offer incense to the house-gods of our ancestors and I will spread all the colours of the pansy. (90) Everything is shining, the door has put up its extended branches and with its morning lamps it takes its own part in the festival rites.

To ensure that you do not see these things as suspect, Corvinus, the Catullus for whose return I am setting up so many altars, has got three small heirs. I would be happy to wait and see who would (95) pay for a sick chicken, closing its eyes, for the sake of so unfruitful a friend; in fact a chicken would mean spending too much, as not even a quail will ever fall as a victim for one who has children. If the wealthy, childless Gallitta and Pacius begin to feel feverish, then the whole colonnade is clothed with vows stuck up there in the legal manner, (100) and people come forward who are likely to promise to sacrifice a hundred oxen, since there are no elephants here not even for money; neither in Latium or anywhere else under our part of the sky is such a beast bred, but it is sourced in the dusky race and grazes

arboribus Rutulis et Turni pascitur agro,
 Caesaris armentum nulli seruire paratum
 priuato, siquidem Tyrio parere solebant
 Hannibali et nostris ducibus regique Molosso
 horum maiores ac dorso ferre cohortis,
 partem aliquam belli, et euntem in proelia turrem.
 nulla igitur mora per Nouium, mora nulla per Histrum
 Pacuuium, quin illud ebur ducatur ad aras
 et cadat ante Lares Gallittae uictima sola
 tantis digna deis et captatoribus horum.
 alter enim, si concedas, mactare uouebit
 de grege seruorum magna et pulcherrima quaeque
 corpora, uel pueris et frontibus ancillarum
 inponet uittas et, si qua est nubilis illi
 Iphigenia domi, dabit hanc altaribus, etsi
 non sperat tragicae furtiuia piacula ceruae.
 laudo meum ciuem, nec comparo testamento
 mille rates; nam si Libilitinam euaserit aeger,
 delebit tabulas inclusus carcere nassae
 post meritum sane mirandum atque omnia soli
 forsan Pacuuio breuiter dabit, ille superbus
 incedet uictis riualibus. ergo uides quam
 grande operae pretium faciat iugulata Mycenis.
 uiuat Pacuuius quaeso uel Nestora totum,
 possideat quantum rapuit Nero, montibus aurum
 exaequet, nec amet quemquam nec ametur ab ullo.

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¹¹⁶ et φ ut *P*

on Rutulian trees and the lands of Turnus. (105) The herd belongs to Caesar and is prepared to be a slave for no private citizen, since their ancestors used to obey the Tyrian Hannibal and our leaders and the Molossian king; they used to carry cohorts on their back, a serious part of the war, a tower marching into battle. (110) There would be no delay on the part of Novius, no delay on the part of Pacuvius Hister, to prevent that ivory being led to the altars and dropping before the house gods of Gallitta, the only beast-victim worthy of such mighty gods and their legacy-hunters.

If you were agreeable to this, Pacuvius will vow to sacrifice (115) from the herd of his slaves the big ones, the most handsome bodies, or he will put chaplets on the foreheads of the boys and the maids and – if he has any sort of marriageable Iphigenia at home, he will give her to the altars, even though he does not hope for the furtive atonement of the tragic deer. (120) I applaud my fellow-citizen, and cannot compare a thousand ships to a legacy. For if the sick man dodges Libitina he will destroy his old will, trapped in the prison of the snare after seeing such truly amazing kindness and he will possibly give it all to Pacuvius alone with a quick stroke of the pen. That man will then (125) strut about proud with his rivals vanquished. So you see how cutting the throat of the Mycenean girl pays off massively. Long live Pacuvius, I pray he live for a whole Nestorian lifespan. May he possess as much as Nero stole, may his gold be heaped as high as mountains, but may he love nobody nor be loved by anyone in return.